

# **The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003**

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# **The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003**

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# Foreword

Exactly a decade ago, the results of the first Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study were published by Harvard University on behalf of the World Health Organization and the World Bank. These organisations and several countries then became interested in applying the GBD approach to better inform health policy, leading to a series of country studies on all continents. Probably the most technically competent and comprehensive of these were the Australian studies, led by Colin Mathers, for Australia as a whole, and Theo Vos for the state of Victoria. These analyses were based around 1996 data and have been widely used to inform priority setting and health policy debates in Australia.

As a result of these initial studies, governments across Australia have become interested in using the burden of disease framework to help quantify health needs. There have also been advances in methods over the past ten years and greater interest among the health policy community in information about the burden of disease in population subgroups. This has all stimulated the need for a revised Australian burden of disease and injury study to update and extend the initial efforts.

This report responds to that need. Some of the world's leading researchers in burden of disease studies, with extensive experience in national applications of the methods, have joined the University of Queensland to create the great focus of expertise reflected in this study. Building on the analytical framework of previous studies, the report includes a number of important extensions of the framework that are highly relevant for policy. They include disease projections, small area analyses and state-level burden of disease results. Also, better methods around comorbidity and risk factor assessment have much improved the scientific basis of the findings reported here.

This comprehensive study will undoubtedly meet the need for detailed information about the burden of disease and injury in Australia and its jurisdictions, about the principal causes of that burden, and how it is changing. But it alone is not enough. With rising pressure on health budgets, governments will increasingly rely not only on information about the burden of disease and injury, but also on cost-effective ways of reducing that burden. This study is a critical and fundamental step in that policy process and we expect it to be used widely to help improve the health of all Australians.

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# Contents

Foreword .....	v
Executive summary .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Key findings .....	2
Total burden of disease and injury .....	2
Health risks .....	5
Differentials in burden across Australia .....	6
Trends – past, present and future .....	7
Key implications.....	8
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Purpose.....	9
1.2 Background.....	9
1.3 Summary measures of population health .....	10
1.4 Disability-Adjusted Life Years .....	11
1.5 Burden of disease analysis in Australia .....	12
1.6 Burden in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples .....	13
1.7 Structure of report.....	13
<b>2 Methodological developments .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Social value choices.....	15
2.2 Causal attribution .....	17
Categorising deaths .....	18
Redistributing non-specific causes of death.....	19
Alternative categories.....	25
2.3 Comorbidity and health.....	25
2.4 Risks to health.....	27
Explicit ‘counterfactuals’ .....	28
Joint risk attribution.....	29
2.5 Past, present and future burden .....	30
Mortality trends and projections .....	32
Incidence and case-fatality.....	32
Non-fatal conditions .....	33
2.6 Differentials in burden .....	34
Categorising geographic areas .....	34
Estimating burden for subpopulations .....	35
Subpopulation comparisons in this report.....	36

<b>3</b>	<b>Burden of disease and injury in Australia .....</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1	Disability-adjusted life years .....	37
3.2	Years of life lost .....	40
3.3	Years lost due to disability.....	43
	Incident YLD.....	43
	Prevalent YLD .....	46
3.4	Age and sex patterns .....	47
	Children aged 0–14 years.....	47
	Older children and adults aged 15–44 years .....	49
	Adults aged 45–64 years .....	50
	Adults aged 65–74 years .....	51
	Older people aged 75 years and over.....	53
3.5	Specific disease and injury categories .....	54
	Cancers .....	55
	Cardiovascular disease.....	58
	Mental disorders .....	59
	Neurological and sense disorders.....	62
	Chronic respiratory diseases .....	64
	Injuries .....	65
	Diabetes .....	67
	Musculoskeletal diseases .....	69
	Alternative categories for selected conditions .....	71
<b>4</b>	<b>Risks to health in Australia.....</b>	<b>72</b>
4.1	Overview .....	72
4.2	Combined effect of 14 selected risks to health.....	73
4.3	Individual contribution of 14 selected risks to health.....	76
	Tobacco.....	76
	High blood pressure .....	77
	High body mass .....	79
	Physical inactivity .....	81
	High blood cholesterol .....	83
	Alcohol.....	84
	Low fruit and vegetable consumption.....	87
	Illicit drugs .....	88
	Occupational exposures and hazards .....	90
	Intimate partner violence.....	92
	Child sexual abuse .....	93
	Urban air pollution .....	95

Unsafe sex .....	98
Osteoporosis .....	99
<b>5 Differentials in burden of disease and injury across Australia .....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.1 Overview .....	101
5.2 Health-adjusted life expectancy .....	102
5.3 State and territory differentials .....	105
5.4 Differentials by socioeconomic status .....	108
5.5 Differentials by remoteness .....	111
<b>6 Past, present and future burden of disease and injury in Australia .....</b>	<b>114</b>
6.1 Overview .....	114
6.2 Health-adjusted life expectancy .....	115
6.3 Burden .....	122
<b>7 Discussion and conclusions .....</b>	<b>129</b>
7.1 Potential applications .....	129
7.2 Policy implications .....	130
7.3 Precision of estimates .....	131
Fatal burden .....	131
Non-fatal burden .....	131
7.4 Access to data .....	134
7.5 Future directions .....	134
<b>Appendix 1: Methods for estimating disability burden .....</b>	<b>137</b>
1A Infectious and parasitic diseases .....	138
Tuberculosis .....	138
Sexually transmitted diseases (excluding HIV/ AIDS) .....	138
HIV/ AIDS .....	138
Diarrhoeal diseases .....	139
Childhood immunisable diseases .....	139
Pertussis .....	139
Tetanus .....	139
Measles .....	140
Rubella .....	140
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b .....	140
Meningitis .....	140
Septicaemia .....	141
Arbovirus infections .....	141
Hepatitis .....	141
Malaria .....	143
Trachoma .....	143

1B Acute respiratory infections .....	144
Lower respiratory tract infections .....	144
Upper respiratory tract infections .....	144
Otitis media.....	145
1C Maternal conditions .....	145
1D Neonatal causes .....	146
Birth trauma and asphyxia .....	146
Low birth weight.....	146
Neonatal infections .....	147
Other conditions arising in the perinatal period .....	147
1E Nutritional deficiencies.....	147
Iron deficiency anaemia .....	147
2F Malignant neoplasms .....	147
Disease incidence data.....	148
Cure rate and mean survival time .....	148
Long-term sequelae of cancer.....	149
2G Other neoplasms .....	150
2H Diabetes .....	150
Diabetes cases .....	150
Retinopathy.....	151
Cataract and glaucoma.....	151
Renal failure.....	152
Neuropathy.....	152
Peripheral vascular disease .....	152
Amputation and diabetic foot .....	152
Ischaemic heart disease and stroke .....	153
2I Endocrine and metabolic disorders.....	153
Haemolytic anaemia .....	153
Other non-deficiency anaemia .....	153
Cystic fibrosis .....	153
Haemophilia .....	154
2J Mental disorders .....	154
Depression & anxiety, substance abuse (excluding heroin and stimulant dependence), borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder .....	154
Heroin dependence and harmful use.....	156
Stimulant dependence.....	156
Psychotic disorders .....	157
Eating disorders .....	158
Childhood disorders.....	158

2K Nervous system and sense organ disorders .....	159
Dementia .....	159
Epilepsy .....	159
Parkinson’s disease .....	159
Motor neurone disease .....	160
Multiple sclerosis .....	160
Huntington’s chorea .....	161
Muscular dystrophy .....	161
Vision loss .....	161
Hearing loss .....	162
Intellectual disability .....	162
Migraine .....	163
2L Cardiovascular disease .....	163
Ischaemic heart disease .....	163
Heart diseases resulting in heart failure .....	164
Stroke .....	165
Other cardiovascular disease .....	166
2M Chronic respiratory diseases.....	167
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease .....	167
Asthma.....	167
2N Diseases of the digestive system.....	168
Peptic ulcer disease .....	168
Cirrhosis of the liver .....	168
Inflammatory bowel disease .....	168
Other diseases of the digestive system .....	169
2O Genitourinary diseases.....	169
Nephritis & nephrosis .....	169
Benign prostatic hypertrophy .....	169
Urinary incontinence .....	170
Infertility.....	170
Other genitourinary diseases .....	171
2P Skin diseases.....	171
Eczema, acne and psoriasis.....	171
Other skin diseases .....	171
2Q Musculoskeletal diseases .....	172
Rheumatoid arthritis .....	172
Osteoarthritis .....	172
Back pain .....	173

Slipped disc.....	173
Occupational overuse syndrome.....	173
Gout.....	174
Other musculoskeletal disorders.....	174
2R Congenital anomalies.....	175
Congenital heart disease.....	175
Digestive system malformations.....	175
Renal agenesis.....	175
Other urogenital tract malformations.....	175
Other congenital anomalies.....	176
2S Oral conditions.....	176
Caries.....	176
Edentulism.....	177
Periodontal disease.....	178
Pulpitis.....	178
2Z Chronic fatigue syndrome.....	178
3 Injuries.....	179
<b>Appendix 2: Methods for attributing risk.....</b>	<b>180</b>
Estimating population attributable fractions.....	180
Choice of theoretical minimum.....	181
Estimating attributable burden.....	181
Tobacco.....	182
High blood pressure.....	182
High body mass.....	183
Physical inactivity.....	183
High blood cholesterol.....	184
Alcohol.....	184
Low fruit and vegetable consumption.....	185
Illicit drugs.....	185
Occupational exposures and hazards.....	186
Child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence.....	187
Urban air pollution.....	188
Unsafe sex.....	191
Osteoporosis.....	191
<b>Annex tables.....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>285</b>
Advisory committee.....	285
Expert advisors.....	286

**Abbreviations and symbols.....288**  
**References .....291**  
**List of tables .....315**  
**List of figures .....319**

